

LETCHWORTH COMMITTEE
10 MARCH 2021

***PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT**

TITLE OF REPORT: GRANTS & COMMUNITY UPDATE

REPORT OF THE POLICY & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT MANAGER

EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

CURRENT COUNCIL PRIORITIES: BUILD THRIVING AND RESILIENT COMMUNITIES

1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 To advise the Committee on the current expenditure and balances of the Committee Grant budgets
- 1.2 To bring to the Committee's attention details of recent requests received for Committee grant funding, made by community groups and local organisations
- 1.3 To advise the Committee of the activities and schemes with which the Community Engagement officers have been involved in.
- 1.4 To bring to the Committee's attention some important community-based activities that will take place during the next few months.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That the Committee be recommended to consider allocating funding from their discretionary community budget towards the projects below.
- 2.2 **£2500** to Open Art Box CIC for Home Workshop Packs as outlined in 8.1.1
- 2.3 **£400** to Transition Town Letchworth for gardening supplies as outlined in 8.1.2
- 2.4 **£2234** to Wilbury & Icknield School Parents Association (WISPA) for a portacabin as outlined in 8.1.3
- 2.5 That the Committee be recommended to endorse the actions taken by the Community Engagement team to promote greater community capacity and well-being for Letchworth.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 To ensure the Committee is kept informed of the work of the Community Engagement Team.
- 3.2 This report is intended to inform Members of the financial resources available to the Committee. It draws attention to the current budgetary situation by assisting in the effective financial management of the Area Committee's budget. This ensures that all actions are performed in line with the Authority's Financial Regulations, the Council's Constitution, and the guidance of the Grants Policy as agreed by Cabinet in January 2020
- 3.3 The awarding of financial assistance to voluntary organisations and the use of discretionary spending allows the Committee to further the aims of the Council Plan.

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 4.1. There are no alternative options being proposed other than those detailed within the text of this report. However, in the course of debate at committee, Members may wish to comment and offer additional views on any of the items included within this report.

5. CONSULTATION WITH RELEVANT MEMBERS AND EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS

- 5.1 Consultation with Members has occurred in connection with the allocation of funds for Community Projects
- 5.2 Consultation with the respective officers and external bodies/groups has taken place regarding funding proposals for Committee Funds.

6. FORWARD PLAN

- 6.1 This report does not contain a recommendation on a key Executive decision and has therefore not been referred to in the Forward Plan.

7. BACKGROUND

- 7.1 With reference to the Council's Constitution, Section 9.3 Area Committees will include budgets for the purpose of providing grants and discretionary budgets that may be used within the area of the Committee for economic, social and environmental well-being.
- 7.2 Members are asked to note the information detailed in Appendix 1. Letchworth Area Committee Budget Spread sheet, which relates to the Area Committee budget balances for 2020/21. The spreadsheet also details pre-allocated sums carried forward from the previous financial years, including balances and past expenditure.

- 8. **RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS-** Councillors are at liberty to consider any amount requested in a grant application as long as the Letchworth area committee has sufficient funds in the 2020/2021 budget.

8.1 Grant Applications

8.1.1

Applicant	Art Box CIC
Project	Home Workshop Packs
Sum requested	£2,500
Total project cost	£3,280
Match funding	£780 personal donations and fundraising
Previous support	£0
NHDC Policy met	Yes
Council Objective:	Building thriving and resilient communities

The main activity of this group is to deliver visual arts activities for people living with dementia and their carers to help enhance their quality of life and wellbeing. They have been providing home workshop packs for people living with dementia and their caregivers since April 2020.

These packs are delivered weekly and contain all the prepared art materials required to carry out an art activity; clear instructions with photo demonstrations, plus specific tools to aid accessibility (eg; non-slip mats; pencil grips and self-opening scissors).

Art Box have worked hard to build a format; a wealth of resources and art materials that support people to access a wide variety of engaging art activities from their homes safely and cost effectively through the Covid-19 crisis.

They have been supporting over 30 families across Hertfordshire with 15 of these living in North Hertfordshire. This funding would allow them to deliver new art packs to their current Letchworth participants for at least 10 weeks (from March-May) as well as reach more local families while the current restrictions are likely to continue to prevent people accessing physical groups.

The art activities are specifically designed for people living with early-stage dementia and their carers, who are shielding at home during the pandemic.

People living with dementia are most likely to be elderly and therefore many of the participants have been shielding for the majority of the last year. Carers have been under greater pressure to keep their loved ones stimulated, engaged and well. The packs offer regular, structured challenges that enable a chance to try new art mediums and explore a creative outlet for both the person with dementia and their carer to share in.

Art Box currently have participants from North Herts, with the majority of these (80%) residents of Letchworth, who will be receiving weekly packs. (15 households) for 10 weeks from 15th March to 21st May 2021.

The requested funding is to enable the project to increase this number to 20 households.

It is worth noting that this project had been operating in a physical sense in collaboration with North Herts Museum prior to the pandemic but was able to adapt so are offering museum artefacts for people to view at home.

Although Art Box CIC has been in operation only since 2019, the artists involved have been working with the community on art projects for many years.

8.1.2

Applicant	Transition Town Letchworth
Project	Woolgrove Family Learning Allotment
Sum requested	£400
Total project cost	£400
Match funding	£0
Previous support	£0
NHDC Policy met	Yes
Council Objective:	Building thriving and resilient communities Respond to challenges to the environment

Funding is sought for the continuation of the Woolgrove Family Learning Allotment project which started last year just before lockdown.

The intention was to support the ongoing funding needs of this educational activity from the umbrella organisation Transition Town Letchworth's food initiatives which have fundraising capability, for example the popular Grower's Market stall and apple pressing. It was also expected we would set up an effective composting system on the allotment to replenish the raised beds. Covid-19 restrictions have meant that:

- fundraising activities that were to have supported this educational project could not be delivered
- the key project volunteer is required to shield and as a result composting has not been effectively introduced yet.

They are therefore seeking funding to help kick-start this project again in 2021, by purchasing topsoil/ compost for the raised beds and seeds and other sundries.

The project is aimed at families living on Jackman's estate. Covid restrictions have made it difficult to find families to take part in this project but the aim is to prepare and look after the raised beds so families can take over when Covid restrictions are reduced. If Covid restrictions persist the produce grown will be donated to local families or the foodbank.

The allotment can support up to four families from the Jackman's estate at a time. The hope is that once families feel confident in growing their own food that they will take on their own allotment. Two families have already gone on to do this. Two families are currently established on the educational allotment and there is space for two more families.

Transition Town Letchworth are a local group of volunteers who are working to build a sustainable Letchworth. Details can be found here: <http://www.transitionlethworth.org/>

8.1.3

Applicant	Wilbury & Icknield School Parents Association (WISPA)
Project	Install a portacabin on school site
Sum requested	£2234
Total project cost	£4,234
Match funding	£2000 requested from Letchworth Heritage Foundation
Previous support	£0
NHDC Policy met	Yes
Council Objective:	Building thriving and resilient communities Respond to challenges to the environment

Wilbury Junior School is signed up to collect materials for several TerraCycle recycling streams. Transition Town Letchworth support this activity by managing town centre collection points which have been set up (with support of the Community Engagement Team) to allow the wider community to join in with this initiative. The school's ability to recycle materials and raise funds is limited by having insufficient space to sort and store the waste. There are minimum volumes that must be reached before materials can be sent to TerraCycle and schools only receive rewards if this weight is reached, so storage space is essential for ensuring the school maximises their fundraising from their recycling activity.

The materials are currently stored in a very small shed and sorting must take place outside. Finding a time when volunteers are available, and the weather is amenable for sorting is an ongoing challenge. The funding being requested will be used to go towards the purchase of a portacabin. The portacabin will be in the grounds of Wilbury Junior School and will be both a storage and sorting centre for TerraCycle and a base for the children's' environmental clubs and activities. It will also be available to be used for community initiatives outside school hours.

Wilbury Junior School headteacher sees the portacabin becoming a hub for local community initiatives, helping to build a stronger more resilient local community.

Information about the terracycling in Letchworth can be found here: <http://www.transitionlethworth.org/terracycle/>

It is still unclear (10-02-21) as to whether this project needs planning permission for the portacabin. However, the grant request covers the cost to obtain this if required. It is acknowledged that we cannot give funding to pay for planning permission. If funding is agreed, it will only be given once any necessary permission is granted.

The portacabin is not a fixed asset belonging to NHDC so does not need to be considered under Capital and Facilities funding.

8.2 Community Engagement and update on Previous Grants awarded

8.2.1 Policy and Community Engagement Team

The team have been continuing to engage and network with local community groups and initiatives. This involved:

- Facilitating network meetings to ensure community groups are kept in touch.
- Assisting in the organisation of the Chair's Volunteer Awards and this year's Holocaust Memorial Day Event.
- Continuing to share and disseminate information on social media and to mailing lists, keeping in touch with the community, voluntary, statutory and non-statutory agencies.
- Facilitating virtual Councillors' Surgeries via Zoom.
- Attending meetings of the North Herts Youth Strategy Group, North Herts Families First and the Family Support Service Partnership.
- Liaising with grant applicants and supporting them in accurately completing the forms.
- Continuing participation in the Inclusion Group, Shaping Our Future and the Staff Consultation Forum.
- Supporting colleagues in the Community Engagement Team by facilitating a Mental Health workshop
- Helping to cover duties of vacant Assistant Community Engagement Officer role
- Supporting colleagues across NHDC by offering online social groups.
- I was tasked to enquire about the poor lighting situation on Howard Park Gardens (HPG). I have been informed that new LED lighting has been installed. Park Ranger Tony Goodwin, employed by John O'Connor but working closely with the NHDC Grounds Team, explained that the lighting issue had taken a long time to be addressed. For his ongoing work at Howard Park Gardens, Tony gave this feedback:

- From my side the major requirement remains for a properly positioned CCTV camera, but I know this is a big ask.
- I am very keen to engage with young people in HPG. I already have hooks-ups with local schools and NHC [we support youngsters doing work experience from NHC Supported Learning team]. Sadly these are currently curtailed due to the pandemic.
- we also work with Groundwork East on youth work. [also currently curtailed].
- our challenge is reaching the young people who already feel disaffected and excluded from society.
- I would be keen to be involved in any initiatives
- The idea of a shelter for teenagers has been discussed a number of times since I have been in role, my understanding is that the heritage aspects of the Park make this tricky, I feel some parties feel it might encourage ASB also.

8.2.2 Update on Previous Grants Awarded

- Letchworth Rink Hockey club were asked to come back with further information, however on reflection and with current circumstances they have decided to postpone their application for the foreseeable future.
- Green Care at Norton - Due to Covid restrictions and the Christmas period activities are on hold. A couple of participants including a helper have been attending to necessary tasks but for most participants the project is currently closed. This is proving very difficult in terms of mental health for some. However, all the preparation is in place for the toilet and it just requires assembly when easing of restrictions allow. Moreover, Green Care has been able to secure a new piece of land for free in order to expand the project into a social enterprise.

This is a brief breakdown of current participants:

1. Middle aged man living alone but in sheltered accommodation, significant learning difficulties. Long term unemployed isolated
2. Middle aged man long term unemployed, living alone has issues with depression and alcohol
3. Middle aged man living alone severe depression issues (has been in patient) long term unemployed-also major physical health issues impacting on his mobility
4. Male Syrian refugee, traumatised in Syria, with physical disability long term unemployed very little spoken English

5. Young man living with mum isolated with significant physical issues and autism long term unemployed
6. Young woman with serious mental health issues including autism living with parents unemployed
7. Professional woman currently unable to work through mental health and personal issues
8. Younger well-educated man unemployed through prolonged issues with depression currently living with parents
9. Younger man struggling with depression and mental health in general unable to work
10. Older woman living alone and isolated has a number of issues impacting on her mobility. Sometimes confused.

8.3 Highways Matters

- 8.3.1 This section is included within the community update report for each committee cycle to facilitate debate and enable appropriate feedback on any of the proposed or listed Highways related schemes.
- 8.3.2 Any new proposals or revised schemes will be forwarded to the respective Herts County Councillor for consideration who will in turn report back and advise the Committee accordingly.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 Sections 9.8.1 (a) and 9.8.1 (b) of the Council's Constitution in respect of the Area Committees' Terms of Reference, notes the following:- To allocate discretionary budgets within the terms determined by the Council and to allocate devolved budgets and activities within the terms determined by the Council. This is outlined in the current Grant Policy agreed by Cabinet in January 2020. Section 9.8.2 (h) of the Constitution in respect of Area Committees' Terms of Reference notes that they may:- Establish and maintain relationships with outside bodies/voluntary organisations operating specifically with the area including, where appropriate, the provision of discretionary grant aid/financial support etc. but excluding grants for district-wide activities.
- 9.2 Chapter 1, s1-8 of the Localism Act 2011 provides a General Power of Competence which gives local authorities the powers to do anything provided that it is not specifically prohibited in legislation.
- 9.3 Section 137 of the Local Government Act 1972 provides specific authority for the Council to incur expenditure on anything which is in the interests of and will bring direct benefit to its area. This includes a charity or other body operating for public service.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

10.1 As outlined in Appendix A Committee budget 2020/21.

10.2 The carry over amount from 2019/20 was £4,828. However, a grant of £3,000 awarded to the Letchworth Festival in 2019/20 has been refunded as the event was cancelled due to Covid-19. This increased the carry forward funding to £7,828, which has been fully spent.

The budget for 2020/21 is £11,000 of which £3,300 has been spent leaving £7,700 to be allocated.

10.3 The grant funding applications for this meeting total **£5,134**. The committee has sufficient funds to award the full amount to all organisations as outlined on the report. If all the grants considered at this meeting are agreed it will leave a carry-over amount of **£2,566**.

11. RISK IMPLICATIONS

11.1 There are no relevant risk entries that have been recorded on Pentana Risk, the Council's performance and risk system. Individual events should have their own risk assessments in place to mitigate any health and safety issues. Whenever a request for grant funding for equipment is received, the recipient of the funding will be advised to obtain insurance for the item to avoid a repeat request for funding in the event of the equipment being stolen or damaged. There are no pertinent risk implications for the Authority associated with any items within this report.

12. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

12.1. In line with the Public Sector Equality Duty, public bodies must, in the exercise of their functions, give due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation, to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

12.2. Area committee funding is awarded to community groups that clearly demonstrate positive impact on the community and wider environment. The projects outlined in this report seek to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations.

13. SOCIAL VALUE IMPLICATIONS

13.1. The Social Value Act and "go local" requirements do not apply to this report.

14. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

14.1 The grant application for a portacabin at Wilbury Junior School has the potential to create positive environmental implications as the intention is to facilitate increased levels of recycling.

15. HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 15.1 There are no pertinent Human Resource implications associated with any items within this report

16. APPENDICES

- 16.1 Appendix 1 – 2020/21 Financial Year Budget Sheet.

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18. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 18.1 Review of Policies and Procedures for Financial Assistance to Voluntary and Community Organisations, November 2002.
- 18.2 Review of Grant Policy Cabinet January 2020